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Letter dated 17 September 2013 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit a communication dated 13 September 2013 from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, forwarding a report on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, covering the period from 1 May to 31 July 2013 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

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Annex

Letter dated 13 September 2013 from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to the Secretary-General

In accordance with Security Council resolutions 1386 (2001) and 2069 (2012), I attach a report on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force covering the period from 1 May 2013 to 31 July 2013 (see enclosure). I should appreciate it if you would make this report available to the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Anders Fogh **Rasmussen**

Enclosure

Quarterly report to the Security Council on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force

I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to the request under Security Council resolution 2069 (2012), informs the Security Council on the progress of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), covering the period from 1 May to 31 July 2013.

2. Throughout the reporting period, ISAF continued to assist the Government of Afghanistan in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

3. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) welcomes the strong commitment and participation of additional United Nations Member States to support this United Nations-authorized mission, particularly in providing advisers and trainers for the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). United Nations Member States are also invited to provide funding support to ANSF.

4. The quarter was marked by a significant waypoint in the ISAF campaign when, on 18 June at the Milestone 2013 ceremony, ANSF assumed lead responsibility for security nationwide. ISAF is now in support of ANSF and has shifted to a training, advisory and assistance role, conducting independent operations mainly for force protection purposes and for the clearance of improvised explosive devices.

5. Much work still needs to be done, with international community support, to develop a sustainable ANSF and guarantee the security gains for the long term. The Supreme Allied Commander Europe assesses that the NATO campaign is on track to meet its objectives.

6. Since the previous report (see S/2013/363), the total number of ISAF troops has continued to decrease in accordance with NATO redeployment planning. As of 1 August 2013, a total of 77,000 ISAF personnel were in theatre,[1] provided by 28 NATO nations and 20 non-NATO nations.

7. ANSF casualties have increased, reflecting the expansion in operations as the insurgency recognizes the importance of this fighting season in the lead-up to the 2014 transition and elections. Casualties among ANSF almost doubled compared with the previous quarter.[2] ISAF suffered 873 casualties,[3] including 54 killed in action and 574 wounded in action (the rest being non-battle deaths or injured). For ISAF, this is a significant decrease compared with the same period in 2012 (104 killed in action and 1,482 wounded in action). Despite the numbers of ANSF casualties, it is assessed that force levels are sustainable based on current recruiting and retention.

8. The Taliban remain resilient but have been unable to achieve their objectives, despite a number of high-profile attacks, which have adversely affected the

[1] Number according to ISAF headquarters review, as of 22 August 2013.

[2] Actual (Afghan) casualty numbers currently not releasable. Enquiries can be submitted to the Government.

[3] According to the ISAF casualty reports summary.

perception of security. At the end of the quarter, it is clear that ANSF have the tactical advantage over the Taliban.

9. Civilian casualties continue to be of significant concern. The total number of civilian casualties during the reporting period was 56 per cent higher compared with the same period in 2012.[4] This is attributable to a 67 per cent increase in civilian casualties caused by the insurgents. Overall, it is assessed that the insurgents were responsible for 88 per cent of civilian combat-related deaths, primarily through the use of improvised explosive devices and complex attacks. The distribution of ISAF-, ANSF- and insurgent-caused civilian casualties during the quarter shows a similar pattern to the 2012 annual trend, with the exception of a rise in insurgent violence against Afghan civilians. ISAF has put considerable and effective effort into reducing civilian casualties and mitigating their effects by reviewing directives and operational procedures, promoting transparency and implementing active mitigation measures that can include compensation or assistance to the victims or their families. ISAF is also working with ANSF to enhance their civilian casualty-mitigation efforts and building capacity to conduct counter-improvised explosive device operations more effectively. Furthermore, following the mid-year report of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, ISAF, in close coordination with UNAMA, has expanded efforts to counter the risks to the population of unexploded ordnance. ISAF is also helping to establish and monitor the full implementation of an Afghan civilian casualties mitigation system.

II. Security situation

10. Violence trends in relation to previous quarters have fluctuated, with enemy-initiated attacks[5] having risen in Regional Command-East, Regional Command-North and Regional Command-West, but they have fallen significantly (by 20 per cent compared with 2012 levels) in Regional Command-South and Regional Command-Southwest. Assessments show that part of the rise in violence in some areas is the result of the expansion of the ANSF security posture. Most important, the violence is increasingly taking place away from the population centres. For example, the top 10 most violent districts account for approximately 35 per cent of enemy-initiated attacks, but contain only 3 per cent of the Afghan population.

11. The insurgents have been unable to tactically win against ANSF, despite their repeated attempts to do so, and as a result, insurgent attempts to disrupt ANSF and ISAF operations have not impeded the mission. One area where insurgents have had moderate success is high-profile attacks specifically aimed at distorting the overall perception of security as part of their information campaign. However, in all of these attacks, ANSF have successfully responded to the incidents. According to a recent (July 2013) survey, Afghans generally have a positive perception of security conditions and perceive that the Government is leading the effort to improve security. However, the population's security needs are not considered to be fully satisfied.

[4] According to ISAF headquarters reporting, as of 16 August 2013.

[5] Enemy-initiated attacks comprise enemy action (enemy-initiated direct fire, indirect fire and surface-to-air fire) and explosive hazard events, and include executed attacks only (improvised explosive device explosions/mine strikes).

12. At the beginning of the quarter, the Taliban announced the start of Operation Khalid bin Walid with five goals: to increase violence; to degrade ANSF capability; to exercise freedom of movement; to defend support zones; and to influence the Afghan population. The insurgency has been unable to achieve the stated goals, and ANSF have demonstrated persistent tactical advantage over the Taliban. The transition process has not been impeded or reversed.

III. Afghan National Security Forces

13. The Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police have continued to go from strength to strength, reaching their final staffing target (352,000). They are on track to complete the fielding of their forces by the end of 2013, and development continues to focus on enhancing capability and professionalism. ANSF are increasingly capable and proactive in conducting security operations, and commanders are improving their understanding and integration of combined arms, despite continuing challenges with sustainability. Logistics, countering improvised explosive devices, operational intelligence and fire support are some of the challenges that ANSF are facing. Recent polling illustrates that the Afghan population views ANSF as a capable force, although many feel that they require coalition assistance. Polling has also illustrated a decrease in the number of respondents who feel "very" or "a little" unsafe, while the number feeling "safe" has increased.

14. The Afghan Air Force made significant progress during the quarter. They contributed to the success of ANSF in the areas of intra-theatre airlift, transport, casualty evacuation, intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance operations, fire delivery and support for training. However, Afghan Air Force aircraft and equipment fielding will take longer than the other ANSF services owing to the time required to train personnel and procure aircraft and equipment. The Afghan Air Force is currently dependent on outside assistance and funding for its sustainment, and this situation will continue even beyond 2018, when the fielding of urgently needed new equipment is planned for completion.

15. The assessment is that throughout the quarter, the Afghan Local Police and local defence forces, as part of layered security operations with other elements of ANSF, have frustrated the insurgents' attempts to influence key population areas. However, levels of training for the local police remain lower than for mainstream ANSF units, resulting in operational risks. These risks continue to be partially mitigated through close monitoring by advisers. In many areas, the local police are often the only connection between the rural population and the Government. Where closely coordinated, the layered security concept (Afghan National Army and Afghan Uniformed Police supporting Afghan Local Police in contact) has demonstrated its effectiveness. The manning of the Afghan Local Police during the quarter grew to 23,551 troops deployed in 117 districts. Recruiting continues to exceed attrition, so that manning should continue to increase

16. The Afghan Public Protection Force, established as a State-owned enterprise to replace private security companies after their disbandment, provides security to convoys, development sites, embassies and ISAF bases. It has continued to increase in capacity, with more than 400 working contracts in place. However, its ability to develop further capability remains a challenge, and the force is being increasingly targeted by the insurgency, particularly in its convoy security role.

17. Finally, the development of the ANSF health-care system, critical to sustaining ANSF, continues to show improvement. Medical leadership is actively engaged in the development of hospital capabilities. An inter-ministerial health council has started developing greater health cooperation, and ANSF are now managing pre-hospital care for less serious casualties, although they still need limited coalition support for very serious casualties and medical transportation by air. The Afghan Air Force has significantly improved its average response time to medical emergency requests and increased the number of missions flown by over 125 per cent.

IV. Civil-military interaction

18. Governance support:

(a) The NATO senior civilian representative continues to be actively engaged with the wider international community. He notably contributed to activities that address governance and corruption, including the International Contact Group meeting on 14 May 2013 and the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework senior officials' meeting on 3 July 2013;

(b) Senior NATO officials regard the 2014 Afghan presidential elections and, to a lesser extent, provincial council elections, as the most critical events of the next 18 months in Afghanistan. At the request of the Independent Election Commission, ISAF has provided assistance in security planning and continues to meet regularly with the Government and international stakeholders to maintain situational awareness of progress within the electoral process. Within means and capabilities, ISAF remains prepared to provide planning and logistical support to address gaps in Government and Independent Election Commission capabilities at their request. Commander ISAF assesses that the ANSF are capable of securing the elections;

(c) ISAF continues its support for security ministries in countering and preventing corruption. NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan and Combined Joint Inter-agency Task Force Shafafiyat have worked closely with the Government in establishing mechanisms in the security ministries on transparency and accountability, and have supported the establishment of a series of transparency and accountability oversight committees in ANSF corps-level commands. ISAF continues to be closely engaged with Transparency International, whose second visit of 2013 took place at the end of the quarter. Transparency International observed progress in the Ministry of Defence with the establishment of transparency and accountability structures, but reported that the Ministry of the Interior had made comparatively little progress in this respect. Corruption is one of the greatest threats to progress in Afghanistan, as well as to government legitimacy and public confidence.

19. Development support:

(a) The NATO-Afghanistan Transformation Task Force at ISAF headquarters has worked to analyse all tasks currently performed by ISAF and prioritize them and identify those that could be terminated at the end of the ISAF mission, those that could be transferred to the potential NATO-led follow-on mission and those that could be offered for transfer to the Afghan Government or to the international community. The transfer of relevant ISAF tasks to the Government is a necessary step towards the transitioning of full responsibility and sovereignty to Afghan hands;

(b) The NATO-Afghanistan Transformation Task Force has worked in close cooperation with the senior civilian representative, the Government and UNAMA to identify Government capability gaps (e.g., Afghan telecommunications, the justice sector, managing and operating the civil aviation system and border enforcement operations). In coordination with the Senior Civilian Representative and ISAF, the Task Force is presenting those identified gaps for discussion within the NATO military chain of command and across the international community.

20. ISAF headquarters is providing strategic advice to the Ministry of Education to develop capacity and capability for tailored literacy, skills training and adult education for ANSF. This includes facilitating the development of the National Literacy Department, the security forces literacy strategy and the literacy trainers programme. Advisers are working with the Ministry of Education to standardize the long-term literacy trainers curriculum, to be implemented prior to the end of 2014. Security ministries are being advised to synchronize their efforts with the National Literacy Department for literacy teacher certification and evaluation, curriculum development and the testing and evaluation of soldiers and policemen.

V. Redeployment

21. During the reporting quarter, the ISAF troop-contributing nations have continued with the redeployment of their personnel and equipment. This activity continues to be coordinated by ISAF and executed by the contributing nations. To date, all personnel and the vast majority of equipment have been redeployed, primarily by air movements. Movement along the ground lines of communication has continued to improve, while air and multimodal lines of communication remain accessible.

22. Diplomatic efforts by NATO headquarters continue to help ensure that northern and southern redeployment ground lines of communication are available, with NATO-brokered and bilateral transit agreements in place. Nevertheless, challenges remain, most of them complex border and customs procedures, bureaucracy and regulations. NATO headquarters, supported by ISAF, is working on those challenges to ensure that the equipment being shipped out of Afghanistan is in full compliance with the transit nations' regulations.

VI. Afghan-Pakistan border situation

23. The total number of confirmed border incidents for the period is 56 per cent lower compared with the same period in 2012. In all, 70 per cent of those incidents were in the border coordination zone, while 30 per cent were cross-border incidents. The majority of the incidents are along the Pakistan-Afghan border.

24. The refurbishment of the Goshta/Mohmand border gate by the Pakistani military created significant tensions with the Government. It caused the cancellation of some tactical military coordination and other higher-level meetings and visits between the two countries. ISAF continued to pursue frequent dialogue with both sides.

25. Effective coordination between ANSF and the Pakistani military is essential in order to apply pressure on Taliban safe havens and reconstitution in the border area. Afghanistan and Pakistan have taken constructive steps during that quarter to

increase military-to-military cooperation. In particular, military representatives of both sides met to coordinate regarding security in the border zone.

VII. ISAF implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1612 (2005)

26. ANSF gender integration made little progress during the quarter. ISAF advisers continue to mentor the Ministry of Defence Assistant for Personnel and Education to reduce the emphasis on ethnicity balancing in order to accelerate gender integration.

27. Children in armed conflicts:

(a) The Government has expressed its willingness to improve the situation for children, but needs training, advice and assistance in order to achieve progress. ISAF has supported the Ministry of the Interior in developing and implementing an awareness campaign against the recruitment of children and in establishing an alert mechanism to report on incidents of child recruitment. ISAF also supported a nationwide awareness campaign for the prevention of child recruitment and assisted in the development of specific child protection training materials for ANSF. At the end of the quarter, NATO senior civilian representative and ISAF facilitated the visit of a delegation from United Nations Headquarters and the United Nations Children's Fund whose purpose was to review the action plan on underage recruitment. The Office of the Senior Civilian Representative facilitated a series of meetings with the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan and ISAF legal advisers responsible for advising the Afghan Government on training and recruitment in the security forces. The United Nations mission had contacts with the Government, ISAF and ANSF and observed that, while some progress had been made, further progress was still required. The Afghans demonstrated political will to make progress and as a result, a task force consisting of the relevant ministries, including the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of the Interior, will be formed;

(b) ISAF personnel involved in recruiting, training or partnering with ANSF personnel are required to report serious human rights abuses of children to their chain of command for onward reporting and action, as appropriate. The recent release of an e-learning module (ADL 166, "Children and Armed Conflict"), developed through NATO-United Nations cooperation, is an important practical tool to raise awareness and create skills to address child protection among NATO (ISAF) troops;

(c) Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and follow-on resolutions are included in ANSF training and advising, for example the basic human rights training provided by the Gender Directorate at the Ministry of Interior, in close cooperation with NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, focusing on child rights and child soldiering.

VIII. Conclusion

28. The quarter marked a clear and cognitive shift as ISAF and the Afghan National Security Forces entered the final phase of a process of transition, which had started with NATO forces in the lead, to NATO forces partnered with Afghan forces, and then to an Afghan lead, with ISAF operating under a security force assistance construct. ANSF proved capable of effectively securing the Afghan people and are on track to effect a full security transition by the end of 2014.

Commander ISAF assesses that ANSF will emerge from the summer both confident and credible in the eyes of the Afghan population. The Supreme Allied Commander Europe assesses that sustaining this confidence will be critical in securing the elections next year and in guaranteeing long-term stability and security in the region. The continued support of the international community will be important in this endeavour.